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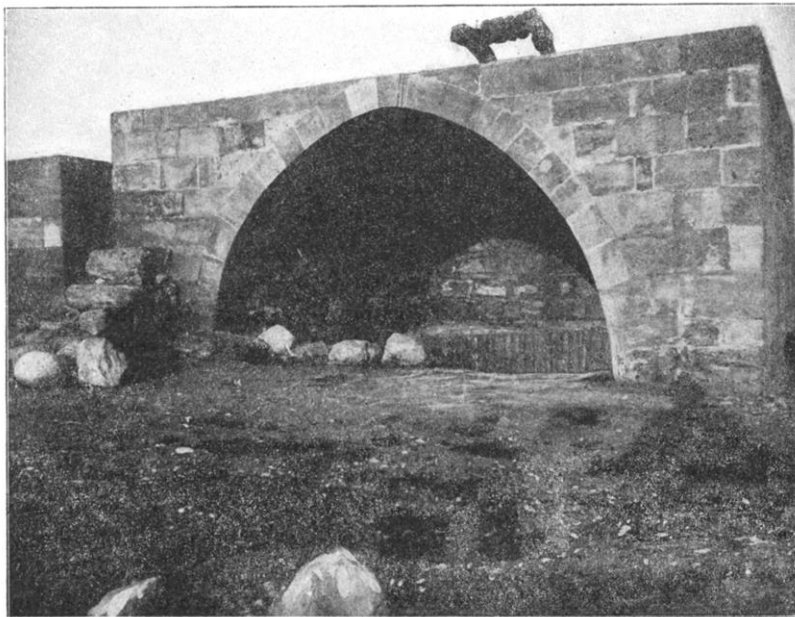
THE WELLS OF BEERSHEBA: A NOTE.

By PROFESSOR LUCIEN GAUTIER, PH.D.,
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I AM sure nobody has read Professor Robinson's remarkable article on "The Wells of Beersheba," in the April number of the BIBLICAL WORLD, with greater interest than myself, although his results seem to contradict so flatly my own former observations. I congratulate him sincerely on his fortunate journey to the Holy Land and on the success of his investigations in Petra, Beersheba, and Kadesh; I hope that there are still in store other gleanings from his traveling experiences.

Perhaps, even after reading his article, some readers of the BIBLICAL WORLD will not be fully aware that till the end of the nineteenth century Beersheba had been a desert and solitary place, where some Bedawin, mostly from the tribe of the Azazimeh, were usually the only human beings to be seen, now and then. All the travelers whom Professor Robinson mentions in his first page, and several others whom I might add, have visited Beersheba when it was still in that condition; and so did I when I went there for the first time, as I have described it in my book, *Souvenirs de Terre-Sainte*, second edition, Lausanne, 1898, pp. 145 ff. I was the first, some years later, to ascertain and to disclose in my letter from Jerusalem to the *Expository Times* of April, 1899 (p. 328), the sudden new departure in the history of Beersheba, namely the fact (*a*) that two of the three then existing wells had been repaired, covered with a vault of masonry, and provided with a pulley for raising water; (*b*) that a *khān* had been built; and (*c*) that there were now permanent inhabitants in the locality.

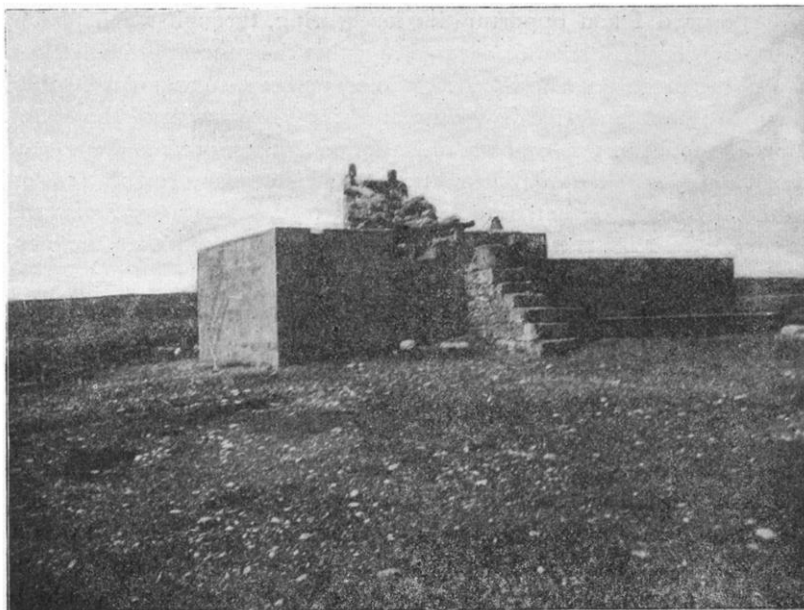
Such was the situation when we went there, my friend Dr. Paterson, of Hebron, and myself, in February, 1899, and carefully measured the depth and the width of the three wells, as well as their distance from each other. My remark, quoted by Professor Robinson (BIBLICAL WORLD, April, 1901, p. 248), stated the true state of things at that moment. My honored colleague, Professor Sellin, of the theological faculty of Vienna, who visited Beersheba a few weeks after me, found everything in the same position. (*Cf. Mittheilungen und Nachrichten des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 1899, p. 30.)



GAUTIER'S MIDDLE WELL (ROBINSON'S CENTER WELL), FROM THE WEST.



GAUTIER'S EASTERN WELL (ROBINSON'S EAST WELL), FROM THE SOUTHWEST.



SUPERSTRUCTURE OVER WELL.



GAUTIER'S WESTERN WELL (ROBINSON'S SOUTHWEST WELL), FROM THE SOUTH.

Afterward I had opportunities for hearing, through Dr. Paterson, that new wells had been discovered and that the process of civilization was going on in Beersheba! I may refer, perhaps, to an article I then published in the *Revue chrétienne* of Paris ("Aux puits d'Abraham," March, 1900, pp. 179-92), where I alluded to these facts and spoke of the Kaimakam. I should also attract Professor Robinson's attention to the circumstance that, both in my letter to the *Expository Times* and in my article in the *Revue chrétienne*, I mentioned that the possible place of a (fourth) well, filled with earth and not used for several generations, had been pointed out to us by the Arabs we met at Beersheba.

Later on, a French lady, Madame Sargenton-Galichon, who visited Beersheba in April, 1900, just one month before Professor Robinson, sent me an account of the six, really the seven, wells then opened or at least discovered, together with a sketch of their respective situation.

Now, according to Madame Sargenton-Galichon and to Professor Robinson, there are "at least" seven wells at Beersheba, and it is by no means impossible that others might yet be found. If this were the case, the argument against Beersheba being = Seven Wells would be almost as strong as it was at the time when only two or three wells were known. And I must confess that, even if there were seven, and only seven, wells, I should not be able to share Professor Robinson's conviction that the name of the place has its origin in the presence of seven wells. "Well of seven" is not = "seven wells." I should rather suppose that the number of the wells had been increased to seven with the purpose of suiting a popular etymology. Professor Stade's explanation of the "postposition of the numeral" as being from Canaanitish origin does not seem to be so easily admitted. It would certainly be very difficult to find any proof that the Canaanitish mode of using numerals was different from the Hebrew.¹ The parallel quoted, viz., Kirjath-arba, is of course a parallel, but in any case, and not only in Stade's hypothesis. Who could assert as proved that Kirjath-arba means "four cities" and not "city of four"?

¹ The postposition of the numeral occurs sometimes, even in Hebrew (cf. KÖNIG, *Syntax*, pp. 323, 324), and chiefly in books of late origin. But then the noun is in the plural and not in the singular.